

Writing against Silence: Antithesis and Ekphrasis in the Prose Fiction of Georgios Vizyenos

MARGARET ALEXIOU

—Τί νὰ σὲ πῶ, παιδί μου! ἀπήντησε τότε σύννους καθὼς ἦτον· ὁ Πατριάρχης εἶναι σοφός καὶ ἅγιος ἄνθρωπος. Γνωρίζει ὅλαις ταῖς βουλαῖς καὶ τὰ θελήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ συγχωρνᾷ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. Μὰ, τί νὰ σὲ πῶ! Εἶναι καλόγερος. Δὲν ἔκαμε παιδιά, γιὰ νὰ μπορῇ νὰ γνωρίσῃ, τί πράγμα εἶναι τὸ νὰ σκοτώσῃ τὸ ἴδιο τὸ παιδί του!

Οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ τῆς ἐπληρώθησαν δακρύων καὶ ἐγὼ ἐσιώπησα.

Georgios Vizyenos, "My Mother's Sin" (1883), pp. 26–27

I. OUTLINE

My purpose in this article is to draw attention to the unique contribution made by Georgios Vizyenos (1849–96) to modern Greek prose fiction by concentrating on two of his six short stories which illustrate how, in the words of one critic, he was "consciously trying to be different from the norm of his time";¹ and, for precisely that reason, he was "ready to reject the order imposed by society and sever links with the authority which invested his discourse with power, even if this means that he will be

This article has been developed from a paper given at a colloquium entitled "The Familiar Stranger: Byzantium in Modern Greece" at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1991. Other participants to whose contributions I shall refer include Panagiotis Agapitos, Diana Haas, Artemis Leontis, and Charles Stewart. Some of the material here presented will appear in expanded form in chapter 10 of my book, *Greek Language, Myth and Metaphor: c. 500–1980*, "From Myth to Fiction: The Case of Georgios Vizyenos" (in progress). The Greek texts of the stories are cited from the edition by P. Moullas, *Νεοελληνικὰ Διηγήματα* (Athens, 1980). For a readable and reliable English translation, see W. F. Wyatt, *My Mother's Sin and Other Stories by Georgios Vizyenos* (Hanover-London, 1988). I have chosen to give my own translations of certain passages, where variation of linguistic register is crucial to my argument.

¹M. Chryssanthopoulos, "Memory and Imagination in the Short Stories of Georgios M. Vizyenos" (henceforth *Vizyenos*), Ph.D. diss. (University of Birmingham, 1986), 3–4. To the many long discussions with Chryssanthopoulos in my supervision of his dissertation (1979–85), and to his sensitive insights, I owe more than can be acknowledged by even the most scrupulous reference to his manuscript. Since this article went to press, two relevant publications have come to my notice: Γ. Βιζυηνός, *Διαβάζω* 278 (January 1992), and V. Athanasopoulos, *Οἱ μύθοι τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Γ. Βιζυηνοῦ* (Athens, 1992). Athanasopoulos provides important new biographical and chronological information, and demonstrates the links between Vizyenos' poetic and prose compositions; but it does not, in my opinion, supersede Chryssanthopoulos' unpublished study in its critical interpretation of the prose stories.

reduced to silence.”² To that end, I shall analyze Vizyenos’ creative development of two distinctively Byzantine characteristics of narrative style, antithesis and ekphrasis, despite his “silence” about Byzantium. I shall also suggest that among the targets of his ambivalent ironies were the φανατικοί of all races, including Greeks and Turks, with their Byzantine and Ottoman “baggages.”³

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the newly independent nation-state of Greece experienced a resurgence of interest in its medieval past. “Byzantium”—itself a construct of sixteenth-century Western Europe—had attracted little, and only negative, attention from Greek intellectuals of the Enlightenment, who shared the Gibbonian view of the later Roman Empire as decadent, static, and benighted by superstition.⁴ Following the War of Independence (1822–28), the tiny Greek state needed not only to expand its geopolitical boundaries in space, but also to consolidate its cultural image across time with the rehabilitation and reappropriation of medieval Hellenism. At about the same time as the Austrian historian Jakob von Fallmerayer published the first of his scholarly treatises to cast doubt on the racial purity of the modern Greeks and their claims to be descended from the ancients, the term “Great Idea” was born in Greece in January 1844.⁵ Its dream to recover the Greek-speaking territories once ruled by the Byzantine Empire, including Constantinople itself, inspired much nationalist and expansionist political rhetoric; it also fashioned the ideological horizons of most Greek intellectuals and writers. If the final debacle of the Asia Minor campaign in 1922 put an end to such rhetoric, a certain visionary nostalgia for the Byzantine and ancient past has nevertheless continued to inspire poets and prose writers as diverse as Angelos Sikelianos and George Seferis, Kostas Varnalis and Odysseas Elytis, Nikos Kazantzakis and Iannis Ritsos.⁶

² *Vizyenos*, 210.

³ See, for example, the narrator’s exhortation to the russophile Turkish protagonist, Selim, whom he addresses as αγαθέ, παράδοξε Τούρκε, and to his Greek readers, in his prologue to “Moskov-Selim,” p. 202: Δὲν ἀμφιβάλλω, ὅτι οἱ φανατικοὶ τῆς φυλῆς σου θὰ βλασφημῶσι τὴν μνήμην ἐνὸς “πιστοῦ,” διότι ἤνοιξε τὰ ἄδυστα τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ πρὸ τῶν βεβήλων ὀφθαλμῶν ἐνὸς ἀπίστου. Φοβοῦμαι μήπως οἱ φανατικοὶ τῆς ἰδικῆς μου φυλῆς ὀνειδίσωσιν ἓνα Ἑλληνα συγγραφέα, διότι δὲν ἀπέκρυψε τὴν ἀρετὴν σου, ἣ δὲν ὑποκατέστησεν ἐν τῇ ἀφηγήσει σου ἓνα χριστιανικὸν ἥρωα. As Chryssanthopoulos points out, this story was published in the periodical *Ἑστία*, April–May 1895, the year before Vizyenos’ death, and three years after his commitment to the asylum in Dromokaiteion: the silence of his critics between 1883 and 1892 was followed by their dithyrambic acclaim until his death in 1896, when they lapsed once more into silence, having seen him buried “at public expense and with fine funeral speeches by Mistery Kourtidēs and Palamas,” *Vizyenos*, 178–79, 210. Chryssanthopoulos (p. 195) also notes the significance of Vizyenos’ poem *Tà ἀρέσκοντα* (1879), in which all nation-states (Russia, Britain, France, and Greece) are rejected in favor of an all-embracing concept of “Eros.”

⁴ For a succinct summary of the history of Byzantine scholarship, and of its changing directions since the 16th century, see A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison, Wis., 1961), 3–42.

⁵ On Fallmerayer’s works and their relatedness to Byzantium, Greek nationalism, and nascent racism, see M. F. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece* (Austin, Texas, 1982), 75–82; on the relevance of Joseph de Arthur Gobineau’s essay “Sur l’inégalité des races” (1843), see idem, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass* (Cambridge, 1988). Michael Llewellyn-Smith gives the historical background to the “Great Idea,” born circa 1844, in his *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor 1919–22* (London, 1972), 2–34. M. Alexiou, “Modern Greek Studies in the West: Between the Classics and the Orient,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4.1 (1986), 3–15, situates both Fallmerayer and Karl Marx in the context of German romanticism and emergent nation-statism.

⁶ Women poets and prose writers, such as Eva Vlami, Penelope Delta, and Jenny Mastoraki have likewise traded on the Byzantine past, see K. Van Dyck, “The Poetics of Censorship,” Ph.D. diss. (University of

For the disciplines of philology, linguistics, and folklore, Byzantium had become one of the major means by which links between classical antiquity and modern Greece could be validated. Medieval poems and epics in the vernacular were brought to light and edited according to normative principles of textual transmission and linguistic development; *corpora* and *monumenta* of Byzantine texts were compiled; folk songs and folk myths were collected to demonstrate the “continuity of Hellenism” through oral transmission.⁷ The contributions of European scholars—especially from Germany—to Byzantine studies during the latter part of the nineteenth century need to be viewed from the same broad perspectives of a romantic search for “Hellenism.”

Meanwhile, in creative writing the Athenian literary elite of the mid-nineteenth century looked consciously both to the Byzantine past and to the European present for models of inspiration in their attempt to develop a truly “Greek” romantic historical novel.⁸ Vizyenos forms an interesting exception to the prevailing climate. He may seem an odd—if not perverse—choice for an illustration of Byzantine presence in modern Greek literature. Why not Alexandros Rangavis, who in the previous generation had appealed directly to the Byzantine past as a mirror for the patriotic values of the new Greek state?⁹ Above all, why not Alexandros Papadiamandis, whose short stories are renowned for their Byzantine religiosity and coloring?¹⁰

The reason is simple. The influence of Byzantium on modern Greek writers, the concepts and perceptions of Byzantium, even the use of Byzantine themes, have received considerable scholarly attention.¹¹ What has been rather less well researched is the continuation and revitalization of some of the inner qualities of Byzantine modes of perception and representation, as realized through the multiple registers of the Greek language. There is no hard evidence, either in his creative writing or in his critical

Oxford, 1990), soon to be published by Princeton University Press. A. Leontis, “‘Byzantium’ as a Modern Counterhegemonic Ideal to the West,” D.O. Colloquium 1991, deals more specifically with the Neo-Orthodox movement in literature, art, and music, as well as with its appropriation of “Byzantium.”

⁷P. Agapitos, “Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium*, 1992, offers a meticulous overview of Greek and German Byzantine philology. The paper will appear in revised form (in Greek) in *ClMed*, 1993. His *Narrative Structure in the Byzantine Vernacular Romances: A Textual and Literary Study of Kallimachos, Belthandros, and Libistros* (Misc-ByzMonac 34) (Munich, 1991), amply demonstrates how Byzantine texts were edited according to normative principles—not all of which have been adequately revised to this day—by German, French, and Greek philologists alike during the latter part of the 19th century.

⁸The other most notable exception to this trend is Emmanuel Roidis’ *Πάπισσα Ἰωάννα* (1886), which satirizes both his contemporaries’ romanticization of history and their obsession with the Greek past.

⁹On the use of Byzantine themes in Greek prose fiction during the fifty years between 1830 and 1880, see M. Vitti, “Ἡ Ἰδεολογικὴ λειτουργία τῆς ἐλληνικῆς ἡθογραφίας (Athens, 1974), and “The Inadequate Tradition: Prose Narrative during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Greek Novel A.D. 1–1985*, ed. R. M. Beaton (London, 1988), 3–10. For bio-bibliographical details on A. R. Rangavis, see L. Politis, *A History of Modern Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1971), 141–49.

¹⁰For a recent close study of Papadiamandis’ literary techniques, with scrupulous attention to literary theory but with scant reference to Byzantium, see G. Farinou-Malamatari, *Ἀφηγηματικὲς τεχνικὲς στὸν Παπαδιαμάντη, 1887–1910* (Athens, 1987). His “Byzantinism,” much commented upon by Greek critics in general terms of Orthodoxy, has never yet been analyzed stylistically, and would form an interesting parallel to the case of Vizyenos.

¹¹See, for example, A. Dimaras, *Ἱστορία τῆς νεοελληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας* (Athens, 1964), 336–67, and references cited in note 9, above.

essays, that Vizyenos knew or cared very much about Byzantium.¹² That makes his fiction a more testing illustration of my argument, especially in view of recent claims that links between the modern Greek novel and its Byzantine and late antique predecessors are superficial and tenuous.¹³ Vizyenos' silence about Byzantium is rendered yet further ambivalent by his very choice of surname, after his birthplace, Vizye, a prehistoric Thracian settlement not too distant from the capital of the later Roman Empire, Vyzantie or "Byzantium," but anterior to it.¹⁴

And yet, the two most distinctive features of Vizyenos' narrative craft—antithesis and ekphrasis—are as profoundly and inwardly Byzantine as anything even in Papadiamandis. Henry Maguire has admirably demonstrated the interconnections between art and literature in Byzantium in his *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*.¹⁵ Antithesis entails not just the rhetorical juxtaposition of opposites (such as past and present, life and death), but the paradoxical ways in which every theme, event, character, or state of mind can be experienced and perceived in terms of its opposite, or defined as what it is not. It is more subtle and complex than the neatly polarized and paired oppositions of Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, in that it explores positives as well as negatives, similarities as well as differences, and at the same time it is more imbued with feeling than Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist critique of Lévi-Strauss: perhaps it is not pure chance that the closest approximation in terms of literary theory is the concept of the dialogic imagination advanced by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin.¹⁶

In Vizyenos' stories antithesis becomes the major means of defining character, plot, and genre. If his "characters" seem to the Western eye a series of one-dimensional representations of endlessly similar figures,¹⁷ they can be interpreted more subtly as infinite splittings or doublings of self and other; a poignant expression of the impossibility

¹²To the contrary, he is cited as sharing with his contemporary A. Zachos a distaste for βυζαντινὸς λογωτατισμός—δλίγον αἶσθημα καὶ μετρίαν σκέψιν; and, on entering school, he fervently declared: Δὲν ἔχω οὐδεμίαν κλίσιν νὰ γίνω κληρικός. Θέλω νὰ μάθω γράμματα: G. Hasiotis, *Βυζαντιναὶ σελίδες* (1910), A 257, Moullas, *Νεοελληνικὰ Διηγήματα*, p. ξα'. When Vizyenos chooses to include or refer to a cultural "other," it is to an extremely wide range of European writers—contemporary, romantic, Renaissance, and medieval (e.g., Ibsen, Uhland, Heine, Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, Dante), as, for example in his remarkably lucid essay for one committed to a mental institution, 'Ἀνὰ τὸν Ἑλικῶνα (March, 1893), ed. I. M. Panagiotopoulos, in Γ.Μ. Βυζυηνός (Βασικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 68) (Athens, 1954), 323–61. All the translations from original texts are Vizyenos' own.

¹³See, for example, Beaton in *The Greek Novel*, viii–ix, and P. A. Bien in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore, 1993).

¹⁴In the ekphrasis cited below (p. 278) he is careful to emphasize the importance to the landscape of the tumuli of the Odryseans, as pre-Hellenic and prehistoric people of Thrace. Names and naming are of crucial significance in all the stories, see Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 40, 78–80, 89–91, 133–34 note 5.

¹⁵(Princeton, 1981).

¹⁶C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (London, 1968), and *The Savage Mind* (London, 1972); J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, 1976); and M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, Texas, 1981), and *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984).

¹⁷W. F. Wyatt, "Vizyenos and His Characters," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 5.1 (1987), 47–63. He concludes: "Why did Vizyenos not write more stories? One cannot know, but I suspect that in having told his own story he had nothing more to say" (p. 60). For a different view, which formed the starting point of my own, see Chryssanthopoulos, "Μεταξὺ φαντασίας καὶ μνήμης," *Ὁ Πολίτης* 38 (1980), 64–69; *Vizyenos*, 1986, and "Reality and Imagination: The Use of History in the Short Stories of Vizyenos," in Beaton, *The Greek Novel*, 11–22.

of a “perfect whole” and of the difficulties inherent in all forms of human communication. As for plot, with Vizyenos it is unfolded not by an omniscient narrator (although all his stories happen to be narrated in the first person), but through antithetical dialogue between narrator and interlocutor(s), dialogues within dialogue, and—most subtly—dialogue between text and reader, the “truth” of which, as we shall see, the narrator is often woefully innocent. Psychoanalytic approaches, however relevant they may be to an author who was thoroughly trained in psychology, can provide only a synchronic—or parachronistic—reading of Vizyenos’ texts. Antithetical modes of narration are not readily compatible with a linear or rational ordering of events: it is as if we are moving in a realm of mood rather than of tense, across space as well as time, and that is why Byzantine modes of expression, including multiple levels of language, continue to be relevant.

Ekphrasis is a set description, rhetorical in style, in which words (λέξεις) and images (εἰκόνες) are analogically counterposed to paint a word-picture: the object of description may vary, but among traditional favorites were a painting, sculpture, or tapestry (as of Eros); a work of craftsmanship (the shield of Achilles); a landscape (especially viewed from a height); a character—or, better perhaps, a recreation of a character’s mood (ἡθοποιεῖα)—and so on. From the time of Gotthold E. Lessing’s essay “Laocoön” (1766) to the present day, ekphrasis has received bad press in the West.¹⁸ It is an external adornment, a rhetorical display; it interrupts the narrative “flow” without adding anything to depth of character or complexity of plot, and so on.

Vizyenos recombines and enriches antithesis and ekphrasis to convey strong emotion, to explore the paradox of cognition and perception—to “fill in,” as it were, the gap between beholder and beheld, as in Byzantine art and literature.¹⁹ More than that: his

¹⁸Lessing writes, “In poetry, a fondness for description, and in painting, a fancy for allegory, has arisen from the desire to make the one a speaking picture without really knowing what it can and ought to paint, and the other a dumb poem, without having considered in how far painting can express universal ideas without abandoning its proper sphere and degenerating into an arbitrary method of writing,” *Laocoön*, ed. E. A. McCormick (1962), 11. W. Steiner echoes his sentiments: ekphrastic poems “express the idea of art’s overcoming time without themselves overcoming it. They fail where the visual arts seemingly succeed; what they gain from the topos is an example of what they can merely aspire to do . . . the outcome is lacking in spatial extension and in the coincidence of aesthetic experience with artifact characteristic of painting. Thus, the literary topos of the still moment is an admission of failure, or of mere figurative success,” *The Colors of Rhetoric* (Chicago, 1982), 42. See also W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, 1986), 104, 99. Not all relevant bibliography can be cited here, but I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Everte Mitsi for alerting me to the different attitudes to word and picture in West and East, and for allowing me to read her Ph.D. dissertation, “Writing against Pictures” (New York University, 1991). Her title inspired my own.

¹⁹For art, see L. Brubaker, “Byzantine Art in the Ninth Century: Theory, Practice and Culture,” *BMGS* 13 (1989), 23–89, and “Perception and Conception: Art, Theory and Culture in Ninth-Century Byzantium,” *Word and Image* 9.1 (1989), 19–32, for detailed analysis and exposition of how images worked in 9th-century and post-iconoclast Byzantium: her analogy of icons to modern advertisements is an apt reminder of the power of image and text. One might add the dimension of sound, since TV ads seldom lack musical accompaniment, whether classical/instrumental or popular/vocal. For ekphrasis in Byzantine literature, see A. R. Littlewood, “Romantic Paradises: The Role of Garden in the Byzantine Romance,” *BMGS* 5 (1979), 95–114, and “A Byzantine Oak and its Classical Acorn: The Literary Artistry of Geometres,” *Progymnasmata* I,” *JÖB* 29 (1980), 133–44, where he illustrates how ekphrasis, especially in the novels and romances, enhances the analogy between humankind and nature, while alerting the reader to a change of mood (ἡθος).

finest ekphraseis evoke a kind of synesthesia not just between word and image, but between word, image, and sound.²⁰

II. VIZYENOS AND THE CONTEXT OF THE 1880S

Πρώτος ἐγὼ διήνοιξα τὸν νέον δρόμον τῆς νεοελληνικῆς λογογραφίας κατορθώσας δία τῶν ἐν τῇ *Ἑστία* διηγημάτων μου νὰ ὑποδείξω, κατ' ἀντίθεσιν πρὸς τὰ τοῦ Ραγκαβῆ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τί ἔστι διήγημα.

Georgios Vizyenos, 1895

Ἔτσι τὰ τουρκομεριτάκια τὰ περιφρονημένα, νὰ ἐμβοῦμε μὲ τὴν “φιλοκαλίαν” καὶ τὴν ὀξύτητα τοῦ πνεύματός μας, εἰς τὰ ρουθούνια τῶν μυιοχάφτηδων τῆς Ἀθήνας.

Georgios Vizyenos, 1895²¹

Vizyenos, born of humble parentage in Ottoman Thrace, was an outsider to the new Greek state, a τουρκομερίτης. By dint of his talent and the generous sponsorship of—among others—Georgios Zarifis, he studied first in Cyprus and Athens and then in Göttingen and Leipzig, where he completed a doctorate in psychology.²² After spending crucial years between the ages of 34 and 36 in London, where four or perhaps five of his six stories were composed, he was appointed in 1885 as lecturer in philology at the University of Athens, also eking out his salary by giving lessons in psychology and logic at a girls' Gymnasium.²³ His poetry was derided during his lifetime; his prose stories were largely ignored or misconstrued, although published in the periodical *Ἑστία* (1882–85, 1895). Consigned as insane to a mental asylum in Daphni in 1892, he died “as a consequence of depression” (συνέπεια μαλασμοῦ) four years later at the age of 47. His madness and death at once attracted prurient critics to read his stories as autobiographical and to acclaim him as the “father of the Greek genre story.” His “madness” proved indeed a dramatic means of drawing attention to his work.²⁴

²⁰Sound and music are problematic: Mitchell (1986), 47–49 indicates some of the problems implicated in the discourse between literature, art, and music. As for synesthesia, B. J. Isbell, “The Metaphoric Process: From Culture to Nature and Back Again,” suggests how anthropological, psycholinguistic, and philosophical approaches to imagery might be merged, in *Animal Myths and Metaphors in South America*, ed. G. Urton (Salt Lake City, 1989), 253–313.

²¹These two remarkable passages, the first from an interview with his doctor, N. Vasiliades, *Δυὸ ὥραι εἰς τὸ Δρομοκαῖτειον*, 1905, and the second quoted by A. Sachinis, Γεώργιος Βυζυηνός, in *Παλιότεροι Πεζογράφοι* (Athens, 1973), are cited from Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 251, notes 2 and 4.

²²His dissertation, *Das Kinderspiel in Bezug auf Psychologie und Pädagogik* (Leipzig, 1881), is clearly relevant to stories 1 and 5, which deal with the transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, and explore the role of fantasy.

²³His inaugural presentation, *Ἡ φιλοσοφία τοῦ καλοῦ παρὰ Πλωτείνῳ* (Athens, 1884), is relevant to his ideas on art, ethics, and sexuality as expressed in “Consequences” and the critical essay *Ἀνὰ τὸν Ἑλικῶνα* (1893). Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 132, refers to his “desire to show a debt to Goethe and the German romantic movement” in his Neoplatonic cosmology and morality, cf. p. 239, note 2. Yet his direct reference to Plotinus in his dissertation, and indirect reference to Greek wonder-tale motifs of “The Navel of the Earth” in “Consequences” (pp. 112, 117–19), suggest rather a wish to engage in dialogue with German romanticism from the perspective of postclassical Greece.

²⁴Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 180–82, 210: Vizyenos’ “insanity,” provoked by his critics’ silence, confined him by court decision to the asylum of Dromokaῖτειον πρὸς θεραπείαν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ δι’ ἀσφάλειαν τῆς κοινωνίας καὶ ἡσυχίας καὶ διατήρησιν, ed. Panagiotopoulos, p. 34 (cited in note 12). It is not, however, manifested in his subsequent utterances. Like so many aspects of the stories themselves, Vizyenos’ life and works are enigmatic, a somewhat unusual example of “life as literature,” or “literature as life”? See A. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, 1985).

Second, context: the watchwords of the new literary establishment of the 1880s were nationalism, demoticism, realism. Folklore (λαογραφία) emerged as discipline concurrently with a new concept of “Nationalliteratur” (λογοτεχνία), and, of course, the demoticist and German appropriation of Byzantium.²⁵ The message went out loud and clear through the columns of the highly influential periodical *‘Estia*, under the aegis of Nikolaos Politis (“father of Greek folklore”): aspiring prose writers should go out to the villages, study and record the peasantry, and faithfully “reflect” in their stories the “true image of the Greek soul.”²⁶

How did the “Turkomeritis” Vizyenos challenge, through his stories, the new realism, nationalism, and demoticism, the German appropriation of Hellenism, and by what cultural means? He was fully acquainted since childhood with rural realities in the Ottoman Empire and had his own sense of split identities even before he studied abroad.²⁷ There is no unifying theme to his six stories, hence they do not constitute a novel in the conventional sense; yet themes and characters in each story are so closely interwoven that together they can be read as antithetical perspectives on a series of interrelated oppositions—or six stories in search of a novel?²⁸ In each case prevailing rationalist perceptions are probed, even reversed, so that language, ethnicity, gender, and sanity are seen as shifting rather than fixed categories.²⁹ All stories are narrated in the first person: “Georgis” in 1, 3, and 5; unnamed in 2, 4, and 6. Yet the author, Vizyenos, partakes also in the life of the narrator’s interlocutors, and, through reported dialogue, the life of his interlocutor’s interlocutors: there is even a split in two stories dealing with childhood and adolescent experiences (1 and 5) between the “I” of the story and the narrator of the text. In other words, he mediates between the “I,” “you,” and “s/he” of the text.³⁰

²⁵ See D. Tziovas, *The Nationism of the Demoticists and its Impact on their Literary Theory, 1880–1930* (Amsterdam, 1986), 19, 193–98, 245–49, for an excellent and densely documented analysis of the interaction between λογοτεχνία, λαογραφία, and ἡθογραφία, and of the introduction of these terms into literary discourse in the 1880s. In the excerpt cited on p. 268 above (1895), Vizyenos uses the idiosyncratic form λογογραφία for “literature.” Tziovas (pp. 1–4) differentiates between the terms “nationalism” (a political movement) and “nationism” (a system of thought): I prefer to use the more familiar, and “unmarked,” term nationalism to cover both political and ideological usages.

²⁶ [Ἡ δημοτικὴ ποίησις] κατοπτρίζουσα πιστὸν ἰδάλμα τῆς ἐθνικῆς ψυχῆς, N. G. Politis, cited by Tziovas, *Nationism*, 247. Compare Politis’ earlier exhortations of 1883 (*‘Estia*) that Greek writers should steer clear of foreign or imported prototypes and return to “pure” Greek mores; also I. Dragoumis’ injunction: “Πήγαινε λοιπὸν στὰ δημοτικὰ τραγούδια, στὴ δημοτικὴ τέχνη καὶ στὴ χωριάτικη καὶ λαϊκὴ ζωὴ γιὰ νὰ ἔβγῃς τὴ γλῶσσα σου καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ σου καί, μ’ αὐτὰ τὰ ἐφόδια, ἂν ἔχεις ὁρμὴ μέσα σου καὶ φύσημα, θὰ πλάσῃς ὅ, τι θέλεις. Παράδοση καὶ πολιτισμὸ καὶ φιλοσοφία,” Ἑλληνικὸς Πολιτισμὸς, cited by Tziovas, *Nationism*, 235.

²⁷ In his essay *Διατὶ ἡ μῆλις δὲν ἔγινε μῆλέα* (Ἑβδομάς, Jan. 1885), Vizyenos humorously describes his own confusion when a pedantic schoolmaster tried to persuade him to change his name from Γεωργῆς to Γόργιας. For a comparable dilemma in his fiction, see *Ποῖος ἦτο ὁ φονεὺς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ μου*, pp. 71–72.

²⁸ The major oppositions include: guilt / innocence (1, 3); sanity / insanity (3, 4, 6); rationality / irrationality (all); modernity / tradition (all); Greek / Turk, Greek / German, Christian / Muslim, Turk / Russian, Greek-Turk-Gypsy (all).

²⁹ Stories 1, 3, and 5 are set between Ottoman Thrace and Istanbul; 4 in Germany; 6 between the Ottoman Empire and Russia; 2 on board ship between Peiraeus and Naples.

³⁰ See Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 156, for an insightful discussion of the differences in stories 1, 3, and 5 in the narrator’s self-presentation. Whereas in “My Mother’s Sin” (1) and “Journey” (5) N can be distinguished, though in different ways, from “Georgis” as child / adult, in “Killer” (3), the narrative voice is consistently adult throughout.

What is Vizyenos trying to tell us? Not the story of his life, despite the first-person narration and the constant splitting / doubling of narrators and characters. Nor does he depict “pure” Greek mores. Rather, he explores paradoxical relations within and between families, genders, generations, and ethnicities, above all the paralogic dimensions of the human mind. Each story can be read as a different novelistic “genre exercise”: autobiography, travelogue, detective story, romance, wonder-tale, documented biography.³¹ Yet these appearances are deceptive: each story subverts and undermines in its own way the very genre it seems to assume. After the manner of twelfth-century experiments with *progymnasmata*, or the *Ptochoprodromika*, Vizyenos is playing with genres.³² Like Cavafy, he succeeds in distancing the reader from the text, subject from object, while at the same time expressing and evoking strong emotion.³³

Antithesis and ekphrasis are evident in all his stories, but in the interest of clarity and brevity I shall concentrate on “Consequences of the Old Story” (Αἱ συνέπειαι τῆς παλαιᾶς ἱστορίας: 4, 1884) for my analysis of antithesis, and “The Only Journey of His Life” (Το μόνον της ζωῆς του ταξίδιον: 5, 1885) for ekphrasis.

III. ANTITHESIS

—Στάσου δα! ἀπήντησεν ἐκεῖνος πειρακτικῶς. Μήπως εἴμεθα εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην ποὺ πουλοῦν τὸ κρέας δίχως κόκκαλα; Σὲ λέγω τὴν ἱστορία καθὼς ἐγέννηκεν. Ἄν δὲν σ’ ἀρέσῃ, ἄφησέ την κατὰ μέρος.

Georgios Vizyenos, “Who was My Brother’s Killer” (1883: p. 72)

As Maguire has said: “In the Byzantine church, antithesis was more than a figure of speech; it was a habit of thought.”³⁴ The same is true of Vizyenos. In “Consequences,” the unnamed narrator describes his experiences as a Greek graduate student of psychology in Germany, in the course of which his best friend Paschalis, another Greek graduate student engaged in metallurgical studies, dies of heart seizure during a mining accident. At precisely the same instant, the narrator is informed of the death of a mad

³¹ Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 201–2.

³² For an appraisal of the *Ptochoprodromika* as “genre exercises,” see A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), 87–117, and M. Alexiou, “The Poverty of Écriture and the Craft of Writing,” *BMGS* 10 (1986), 1–50. The differences between the 12th and the 19th centuries are, of course, self-evident, and I am far from suggesting any direct link or “influence”; however, the similarities in the perceptions of language as primarily rhetorical, and the consequently ambivalent nature of “truth” and “meaning” indicate the possibility of a more profound interconnection at the level of multiple linguistic registers.

³³ Cavafy, too, was an outsider to the Greek nation-state, who chose to define himself as neither “Hellenic” nor “Hellenic” (Ἑλλην) but as ἑλληνικός. His use of Byzantine themes was discussed by D. Haas, “Faces of Byzantium in the Poetry of Cavafy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium*, 1991; see also her “Cavafy’s Reading Notes on Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*,” *Folia Neohellenica* 4 (1982), 25–96. Whereas Cavafy differs from Vizyenos in making frequent and explicit reference to Byzantium in his poems, he does so in order to highlight the gaps and interstices in history, as well as the diversity and heterogeneity of “Greek” speakers. In a remarkable essay on Byzantine literature, intended for a popular Alexandrian audience, he chooses to praise not the fashionable vernacular poets whose works were currently receiving assiduous philological attention, but the religious hymns of Synesios of Cyrene and Romanos the Melodist, and the learned epigrams and poems of Agathias, Nonnos, Quintus, and Michael Choniates, Οἱ βυζαντινοὶ ποιηταί, see G. A. Papoutsakis, Καβάφης, Πεζά (Athens, 1963), 43–50. The article was first published in April 1892 in the Alexandrian newspaper Τηλέγραφος.

³⁴ *Art and Eloquence*, 53.

German girl he had visited earlier in a mental asylum. He assumes her to be the beautiful Klara, the object of Paschalis' hopeless passion. How does antithesis function on the level of character and plot, text and meaning?

The Greek word ἡθοποιεῖα has resonances other than "characterization": less the stamping of a figure, more a process of shaping or "re-presenting"/"im-personating" moral qualities, as on stage. It is therefore not surprising to find that each of the protagonists in "Consequences" seems to impersonate, through the medium of fiction, antithetical aspects of the author's own sense of self and other. Narrator (henceforth N) and Paschalis are each other's closest friend; yet they are mirror images. Where N provides rational explanations for *sanitas* (physical and mental), Paschalis is romantic and mystical. Where N claims authority to interpret as δεινὸς φιλόλογος ("formidable philologist"), Paschalis puts his faith in poetry and mythology. Yet in their everyday, practical lives, N leads an unsullied intellectual existence, while Paschalis goes down the mine every day and comes back, physically dirty but with a sterner sense of moral and aesthetic purity. Both are polar but complementary opposites of the Greek abroad (Ἕλλην ξενιτευμένον), and of the author's own experience as a student in Germany, who happened also to engage in mining activities in Thrace. In contrast to the German poet Goethe's successful mining activities in the Harz mountains during the Weimar court period, Vizyenos' ventures, some hundred years later, ended in failure.³⁵

Paschalis and Klara are—according to Paschalis' narrations within the narrator's story—perfect "soul mates," destined for each other but separated in life by cultural and class differences, as their names (Greek and German counterparts) suggest.³⁶ He is an impecunious Greek studying abroad; she is the only daughter of his eminent and wealthy German professor. He is dark, morose, and introverted; she is blonde, flirtatious, and extroverted. Both love music, opera, and ice-skating. She has the advantages of wealth and leisure to indulge these pleasures; he pays dearly with health and life by excavating gems from the "navel of the earth" in order to purify his soul.

There are two other shadowy figures in the background. The first is the mad German girl in the asylum near Göttingen, witnessed by N before his meeting with Paschalis. Suffering from a rare psychiatric disorder, thought to be the result of a "broken heart," the girl sings to her harp, then smashes it and thrashes around the blue velvet of her padded, dome-shaped "cell." Is she Klara? N assumes so only when he hears Paschalis' "vision" (theophany) of himself and Klara united in heaven; but the evidence for this assumption is purely circumstantial: both girls happen to be blonde and in love; both come from the same region of Germany; one is mad, sings strange songs, and plays the harp to N, the other is seen by her lover, Paschalis, against a blue background as an "angel in heaven," just before the merging of their souls (pp. 160–61). Nevertheless, N refuses to entrust Paschalis, his interlocutor, or us, his readers, with her identity. By refusing to disclose to Paschalis information on the girl in the asylum, N forces us to

³⁵Details of Vizyenos' mining ventures in Samokovi, Thrace, and of his interest in mines from as early as 1881, are given by Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 31–32. Chryssanthopoulos does not, however, mention Goethe's mining activities.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 145: "Paschalis" evokes "Pascha," the Resurrection of Christ, while of "Klara," he says: Κλάρα . . . ἐκ τοῦ ἐρεβους τῆς σκοτεινῆς φαντασίας μου ἀνέβη ἡ ἀσπιλος μορφή τῆς Κλάρας, ὡς ἀστὴρ ἀνατέλλων, p. 160.

question both her identity and his own motivation for concealment. He tells us he “kept silent” out of consideration for Paschalis’ feelings; yet as δεινὸς φιλόλογος, he interprets for Paschalis the crucial letter from Klara’s father in a manner both dubious and malevolent (pp. 154–61). Is N repressing his own infatuation with the girl?³⁷ Or is Vizyenos trying to tell us that in Greek-German interactions, no one can be quite certain who is what? Either way, as in “Who was My Brother’s Killer,” he forces the reader into the role of detective, without offering any easy solutions or conclusions.

The second shadowy figure in “Consequences” is the ostensible originator of “the old story,” Evlalia, who some years before had first seduced then jilted Paschalis in Athens. Evlalia, whose name means “eloquence,” was a washerwoman’s daughter to whom Paschalis had given lessons in exchange for free laundering of his dirty clothes and linen.³⁸ As a consequence of this “old story” he feels his soul permanently sullied, its inner gems trampled by swine, unworthy and unable to respond to Klara’s passion, yet fiercely eloquent in his denouncement of “Evlalia” in language redolent with images and precepts from Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.³⁹

Dirt and washing, clothes and jewels, are shifting metaphors of exchange throughout this story: Paschalis worked his way through Athens University by exchanging his dirty clothes for lessons to the washerwoman’s daughter, only to have the purity of his soul indelibly stained in his own eyes; the mad girl is expecting her lover to bring back “big diamonds” from the navel of the earth, while Paschalis seeks them in vain from the depths of his soul, without ever questioning Klara’s purity; and, whereas Paschalis takes obvious delight in regaling N, on the morning of their projected visit to the mine called “Caroline,” with Heine’s sexual joke about “dirty Carolines” after getting his best suit muddled down the very same mine, he himself pays with his life for Evlalia’s filth.⁴⁰

³⁷ So far as I am aware, Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 142–45, is the first critic to have noticed the purely coincidental and circumstantial nature of the evidence for identifying Klara with the girl in the asylum, and to have understood its significance. As he says, the point is that the reader may *infer* the identification, but neither narrator nor narrative permit its confirmation: Klara’s flowing blonde hair and harp against a blue-domed sky are, after all, common attributes of angels in heaven.

³⁸ It is almost certainly pure chance that “Eulalios” happens to be the name of one of Byzantium’s most famous—and rarely named—painters of the 12th century, see Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, 11–12. But not quite: the irony of her name is surely deliberate. “Eulalia,” or “the eloquent one,” is the only woman whose voice is silenced throughout the story. She is also the only sexually active and working-class Greek female to figure in Vizyenos’ stories. Her name was inspired by Heinrich Heine’s reference in *Harzreise* (1824) to the eponymous heroine of August von Kotzebue’s play, *Menschenhass und Reue* (1789), who committed adultery but won forgiveness through repentance and atonement: see W. F. Wyatt, “Συνέπειαι,” *Διαβάζω* 278 (1992), 41–42. Names and naming are further indications of Vizyenos’ engaged but ironic dialogue with German romanticism and its appropriation of “Neohellenism.”

³⁹ Compare the following dialogue between Paschalis and N in *Vizyenos*, 140, with Matt. 7.6: . . . Ἀλλά, ἀδάμαντες καὶ μαργαρίται, ὅταν παρατεθοῦν ἅπαξ εἰς τοὺς χοίρους, καὶ μασηθοῦν ὑπ’ αὐτῶν, γίνονται ἀκατάλληλοι πλέον νὰ κοσμήσουν καὶ τὴν μετριωτέραν κεφαλὴν, πολὺ ὀλιγώτερον νὰ ὑψωθοῦν μέχρι τοῦ διαδήματος μιᾶς βασιλείας.—Καὶ δὲν τοὺς πλύνω; εἶπον ἐγὼ γελάσας, νὰ γείνουν καθὼς πρῶτα;—ὦ—χῶ—εἶπεν ὁ Πασχάλης αὐστηρῶς. Νὰ πλύνῃς τοὺς φυσικοὺς καὶ νὰ τοὺς καθαρίσῃς. Ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἠθικοὺς; Ἀλλὰ τὰ αἰσθήματα καὶ τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς, τὰ μόνὰ κειμέλια τῆς καρδίας; Ἀλλὰ τὸν ἠθικὸν αὐτὸν ρῦπον μὲ ποῖον ὀξύ, μὲ ποῖον σάπωνα θὰ τὰ πλύνῃς, παρακαλῶ; Νὰ μὴ τὰ κυλίσῃς ἅπαξ εἰς τὸν βόρβορον, νὰ μὴ τὰ κυλιδῶσῃς. Τὰ ἐκύλισες; Αἱ κυλίδες τῶν εἶναι ἀνεξίτηλοι. . . . Paschalis’ formulations elaborate Matt. 7.6: Μὴ δώτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσί, μηδὲ βάλητε τοὺς μαργαρίτας εἰς τοὺς χοίρους ὧν ἐμπροσθεν τῶν χοίρων, μήποτε καταπατήσωσιν αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτῶν καὶ στραφέντες ρήξωσιν ὑμᾶς.

⁴⁰ There are some fascinating, and to my knowledge hitherto unexplored, analogies between Αἱ συνέπειαι and the critical essay Ἀνὰ τὸν Ἑλικῶνα· Βαλλίσματα, published a year after Vizyenos’ consignment

Ἡθοποιεῖα, then, is different from “character,” less a “stamp,” however deeply imprinted, but rather the scrutinization of *persona* under antithetical twists of the narrative lens. “Plot” in *Vizyenos* is equally recalcitrant to conventional analysis: the Greek word *πλοκή* means “web,” “mesh,” or the weaving together of different strands. And that is precisely what “Consequences” is. There is no straight story line, only an exploration into the shifting categories of language, sanity, gender, ethnicity, and artistic and scientific discourse. These are antithetically intertwined through imagery and word play, and above all by intertextual allusion to Greek and German language, poetry, and mythology across the ages.

To untangle the web, let us start with the beginning and end of the story. “Consequences” commences with a somewhat pedantic excursus on the rigors of the German winter (ψύχος), which have afflicted N with a vexatious cough (βήξ), a common enough ailment which nevertheless prevented him from attending public lectures for more than two semesters, since his coughing clearly bothered his otherwise hospitable German fellow students (pp. 104–5). Climatology is a recurrent theme throughout the story, connected with mineralogy, but also metaphorically with ethics, art, and psychology (ψυχολογία). N’s professor, Herr H***, understood to be an adherent of the neuropathologist H. Lotze, if not Lotze himself, insists that the cough is not the result of the German cold (ψύχος) but of a weakness of ψυχή (soul), or the Psi-factor.⁴¹

The story concludes with the citation in Greek, not for the first time, of Goethe’s poem for the Bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister*, “Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,” best known in Schubert’s beautiful rendering as “Wanderer’s Nachtlied”: “warte nur, warte nur, balde ruhest du auch” are the final words he whispers on the death of his closest friend, Paschalis. The poem was inspired at the height of the German romantic movement of Neohellenism by Alkman’s lyric fragment (Page, Fr. 34): εὐδοῦσι δ’ ὀρέων κορυφαί τε

to the Daphni asylum (Ἑστία, March 1893). In both, an excursion up to the mountain (Goethe’s Harz and the Muses’ Helikon) operates figuratively as a metaphor for seeking art’s gems. In the story, the mad girl in the asylum refers allusively to the Greek wonder-tale theme Ὁ ἀφαλός τῆς γῆς when she informs the narrator that her lover has gone down to the center of the earth to dig for diamond rings, big enough for their engagement (p. 112), whereas the point of the wonder-tale is that the secret of the navel of the earth can only be discovered by the pure and wise in heart, as Paschalis understands to his cost (139–40): immediately after her literal-minded interpretation of her lover’s quest, the girl launches into song (113–15). He closes his essay with the comment: Τίνες ἐξ ὑμῶν μορφάζετε διότι, ἐνῶ σᾶς ἔταξα ἀδάμαντας καὶ μαργαρίτας, σᾶς ἐφίλεψα μὲ στίχους, στίχους, στίχους. . . . Μὲ συγχωρεῖτε. Οἱ στίχοι τοὺς ὁποίους σᾶς παρέθεσα εἶναι ἀδάμαντες καὶ μαργαρίται τιμαλφέστατοι, μὲ τὴν διαφορὰν ὅτι πλουτίζουν καὶ κοσμοῦν τὰ στήθη καὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς ὅχι ἀπ’ ἐξω, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ μέσα. Cited from ed. Panagiotopoulos, pp. 323–61. Other dialogues implied in the story are between the pure-souled hero of Greek mythology and the crooked dwarf of German folklore, as well as with those beautiful but bitter songs of xenitia, also sung as funeral laments, where the Greek travels abroad only to find that foreign women refuse to wash his dirty linen: Γκάμου τοὺς ξένους ἀδερφούς, τίς ξένες παραμάνες,/ γκάμου καὶ μιὰ παραδερχὴ γιὰ νὰ μοῦ πλέν’ τὰ ρούχα./ Τὰ πλένει μιά, τὰ πλένει δύο, τὰ πλένει τρεῖς καὶ πέντε,/ κι ἀπὸ τίς πέντε καὶ μπροστὰ τὰ ρίχνει στὰ σοκάκια.—Παρι, ξένι μ’, τὰ ρούχα σου, παρι καὶ τὰ λερά σου./ Ἐδῶ τοὺς ξένους δὲν τοὺς θέλω, οὐδὲ τοὺς παραχώνω, L. M. Danforth, *Death Rituals in Rural Greece* (Princeton, 1982), 92.

⁴¹ Chrysanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 41, 138–39: a very thin line is drawn between “Herr H****” and Rudolf Herman Lotze, German philosopher and physiologist, one of the founders of psychophysiology: he died in 1881, hence N’s comment on him in “Consequences” as μακαρίτης τώρα (p. 105) is fully consistent with the story’s chronology.

καὶ φαράγγες / εὐδοῦσι δ' οἰώνων φύλα τανυπτερύγων.⁴² Double irony lies in the German appropriation both of Alkman and of the term Neohellenism, pathos in the modern Greek reappropriation of Alkman, through Goethe, as a lament for exile and death.

It is as if Vizyenos were playing a literary game of paradox with Greek and German poetry—complex, serious, and at the same time amusing. As a philhellene, Herr H*** cannot resist regaling his pupil with Homeric citations, all delivered in impeccable ancient Greek, yet rendered quite incomprehensible to the reader by the author's mercilessly accurate transcription of his German professor's Erasmian pronunciation into modern Greek, as in his exhortation to his pupil: 'Αἰὲν ἀριστοῖαι καὶ γιουπέροκον ἔμεναι πάντοον Τοῖτόνοον (pp. 105–6), or in his wish 'Αἰ γὰρ Τσόῦ τε πάτερ, καὶ 'Ατεεναῖε καὶ 'Απολλὼν τοιοῦτοῖ ντέκα μοῖ ζουμφράντιμονες ἄϊεν 'Αχαιῶν! (p. 110). The effect of such "Greek" on N can perhaps best be rendered by the following Germanic coloring to the English equivalent "alvegs all Toytons besser und tsourpass tsu," and "Ach, Faater Tzoys und Ateenee und Aplon, ever zat tsen sooch coonslers of Achayoy var so mine." But our Greek author gets his own back on his fictitious German professor by first putting into Greek the mad German girl's rendering of Mignon's song from *Wilhelm Meister*, "Kennst du das Land,/wo die Zitronen blühn?," then making her curse all great epic and national poets (implicitly Homer and Goethe) for their inability to express suffering, and finally to break out into "her" stunningly beautiful lyrics and melody, which are in fact none other than the author's own lyric poem, 'Ανεμόνη, "Anemone."⁴³ Humor, ambivalence, and irony in the treatment of language and texts seem to undermine the romantic elements of the plot, through intertextual allusion, in a manner not unworthy of Byzantine literary texts from the twelfth century.

To turn now to mythology and the wonder-tale, the mad girl in the asylum asks N "How hot is the center of the earth? My lover went down there to dig for diamond rings, engagement rings. Big rings! That's why he hasn't come back yet. He's a clever man, he'll go to the navel of the earth and find them, then he'll come back" (p. 112). The references are oblique, but they recall both the miner-dwarf of German folklore and the Greek wonder-tale "Navel of the Earth," where the cruel but beautiful princess is rescued from her obsession of building a tower out of the heads of unwanted suitors by a brave young prince from a distant kingdom who dares to go down into the depths of his family's underworld to bring back, from a mangy old eagle, gems as the proof of earth's deepest secret: a magic tree of pearls with three springs at its root, one flowing with gold, the second with silver, and the third with diamonds. This wonder-tale theme provides the only textual, if tenuous, link between the girl in the asylum and Klara, through N's story and his dialogue with Paschalis.⁴⁴

The link operates through multiple and antithetical, literal and metaphorical asso-

⁴²On Goethe's probable debt to Alkman, never fully acknowledged either by the poet or by his critics, and on Vizyenos' rendering of the Greek via German texts, see W. F. Wyatt, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, May 1993.

⁴³ed. Panagiotopoulos, 57.

⁴⁴For the wonder-tale, see G. Megas, *Ἑλληνικά Παραμύθια* (Athens, 1983), 156–63; for earlier poems which engage in intertextual dialogue with Greek folklore and German lyric poetry see P. I. Makrakis, *Μὴ ἀγνωστή συλλογὴ τοῦ Γεωργίου Βιζηνίου*, *Ἑταιρεία Θερακικῶν Μελετῶν* 79 (1959), 5–18; and ed. Panagiotopoulos, pp. 70–93. Makrakis notes how Vizyenos often chooses, through his subtle allusion to modern Greek folklore, to invert the German appropriation of Greek myth by poets such as Goethe and Schiller.

ciations of jewels and mining: the mad girl's belief that her lover has gone to the center of the earth to bring back real diamonds seems to transfer to the realm of myth Paschalis' actual mining activities in Klausthal. Every day, weather permitting, he goes down into the mine, and by the time of N's visit he has amassed quite a collection of the prettiest mineral specimens. But whereas the girl in the asylum has understood jewels literally as precious stones to be brought back as external adornments from the center of the earth to clinch her marriage, Paschalis sees them metonymically, as crystallizations of the purest and innermost emotions, emanating from the very navel of the human "psyche." Evlalia, the washerwoman's daughter, has sullied him, rendering him forever unworthy and impotent to respond to Klara's passion. "He is cold" (ψυχρός), says the girl in the asylum to N of her lover, in yet another inversion of conventional expectations (p. 112): Germans are supposed to be "cold," while Greeks are "hot."

And, what *was* "the old story"? Ἱστορία in Greek means not just "tale," "narrative," and "history," but also "process of inquiry," "story told in a work of art." Reread across time and space, the title can also be interpreted as the consequences of dialogues between epic and lyric, between Greek and German Hellenism from Homer and Alkman to Goethe and Heine—the consequences of which were especially paradoxical for the emergent Greek nation-state and its relationship both to its past (ancient and Byzantine) and to Germany.

IV. EKPHRASIS

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögeln schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.
Goethe, "Wanderers Nachtlied"

Dies Bildniss ist bezaubernd schön,
Wie noch kein Auge je gesehn!
Ich fühl es, wie dies Götterbild
Mein Herz mit neuer Regung füllt.
Dies Etwas kann ich zwar nicht nennen,
Doch fühl ich's hier wie Feuer brennen.
Soll die Empfindung Liebe sein?
Ja, ja! Die Liebe ist's allein.—
O wenn ich sie nur finden könnte!
O wenn sie doch schon vor mir stände!
Ich würde—würde—warm und rein—
Was würde ich?—Ich würde sie voll Entzücken
An diesen heissen Busen drücken
Und ewig wäre sie dann mein.
Mozart / Schikaneder, *Die Zauberflöte* (italics mine)

"Journey" is no less enigmatic than "Consequences." But here the level of narration appears to be that of a ten-year-old child who cannot tell the difference between reality and fantasy, not that of a rational graduate student of psychology at the University of Göttingen. The story, aptly described by Kostis Palamas as *ὄνειρόδραμα*, "dream drama," is in four parts, or rather symphonic movements, as I would put it, each in a different key and tempo, rounded off with an ambivalent coda. The narrator begins in the wonder-tale world of childhood, fed by his grandfather's stories of travel and adventure, and ends with the death of both grandfather and wonderland. The action takes place between Istanbul and Vizye, as he is summoned from the tailor's establishment to which he is apprenticed to return to his village to pay his respects to his dying grandfather. In the interval between story time and narration, the narrator has learned to write (p. 175).

What is the journey, and whose is it? Grandfather had passed his whole life in the fantasy world of his grandmother's wonder-tales without ever having left his native village. Yet what he lacks horizontally, as it were, in experience of the outside world, is compensated for by vertical depth in space and time. His imaginative world can be traced back in the female line to the early 1700s: he claims he had been brought up as a girl and married off as a boy at the age of ten to avoid conscription to the Janissaries, and his grandmother had told him stories while teaching him to sew and embroider. His grandson, on the other hand, brought up in "golden times," with access to both travel and education, is forced to confront the boundaries of the real and imaginary worlds. The boy's awakening is neither easy nor painless, and brings with it first rage, then a profound sense of impending loss, expressed through ekphrasis.

Ekphrasis in Vizyenos, with its untranslatably rich variegations of Greek and multiple levels of signification, conveys grief for the passing not only of a beloved grandfather, but of a way of life, unchanged for countless centuries, which may have been restricted, and certainly not free of violence and cruelty, but was somehow integrable with nature and with the ethnic and cultural other, with an inner peace unattainable in the wider modern world of nation-statism, despite the advantages of travel and education. The gap that threatens to separate narrator from grandfather is far greater, and more confusing because irreversible, than that between grandfather and grandfather's grandmother, who passed on her stories.⁴⁵ One senses that the grandfather's peaceful end to the longest and most important journey—life itself—will prove beyond the narrator's reach, as indeed was the case for Vizyenos. There is also a hint of Goethe's "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh," whispered by the narrator of "Consequences" on the death of Paschalis, in the elegiac tones of the ekphraseis which mark the narrator's initiation into the "grown-up world" of contemporary life. Which Georgis is the child, which the old man—and where is the narrator placed between them?

By the end of the story the narrator has decided, as a result of his grandfather's experience, to give up the needle. Yet he has not entirely forgotten the stitcher's craft, or the magic attributed by legend to the skill of sewing *χωρίς ραφή και ράμμα*, "without seam or stitch." Throughout, Vizyenos has exploited with exquisite subtlety the meto-

⁴⁵ It is a gap expressed with equal poignancy by other writers who have experienced or witnessed society's transition from orality to literacy, such as Thomas Hardy's poems "One We Knew" and "In Time to the Breaking of Nations," and Maurice O'Sullivan's *Twenty Years A-Growing*.

nym of writing as sewing, γραφή as ραφή—as old in Greek as the ραψωδός “rhapsode” Homer himself—for the narration is, indeed, “without seam or stitch,” just like the bridal garments sewn by the Nereids in his grandfather’s wonder-tale (pp. 168–70). The inevitable separation between the worlds of grandfather and grandson is rendered more poignant by the closeness of their personal relationship: both share the same name, and whereas the boy mentions his mother only once (p. 175), his grandfather addresses him tenderly as ψυχή μου, “my soul.” The merging of souls—like those of Klara and Paschalis—is further effected through the double image of the journey, both as metaphor for life and as nocturnal fantasy reuniting “home” and “foreign parts.” And throughout, the preponderant use of imperfective moods conveys a sense of timelessness, skillfully concealing the seams and stitches of the narrating act—even though grandson’s last image of grandfather is that he was darning his wife’s sock!

It is not only grandson and grandfather who merge into each other: orality and literacy, writing and sewing, words and pictures are interwoven, not least through the multiple registers of the Greek language, shifting from near-dialect for the tender exchanges between grandfather and grandson—and grandmother’s squawking reproaches to all and sundry (including the cat!)—to moderate katharevousa for the narrator’s narration and high katharevousa for the intricately embroidered ekphraseis. First, grandfather and grandson as they exchange stories (note how the former uses his hands to knit and gesticulate for emphasis at the same time), in a dialogue which leads into two of the finest ekphraseis:

—Καὶ πῶς εἶναι ἡ Φώκια, παπποῦ;

—Νά ἔτσι—εἶπεν ὁ παπποῦς χειρονομῶν οὕτως, ὥς ἔαν εἶχε τὴν Φώκιαν ἐνώπιόν του καὶ μοὶ ὠριζεν ἀνατομικῶς τὰ μέλη της.—’Απὸ τὸν ἀφαλὸ καὶ πάνου εἶναι ἡ ἔμορφότερη γυναῖκα, ἀπὸ τὸν ἀφαλὸ καὶ κάτω εἶναι τὸ φοβερώτερο ψάρι. Κάθεται στὸν πάτο τῆς θάλασσας. Μὰ κεῖ ποὺ σκιαχθῇ κανένα καράβι ποὺ περνᾷ ἀπὸ πάνω, κάμνει μία χόπ! καὶ βγαίνει στὴν ἐπιφάνεια· κάμνει μιὰ χάπ! καὶ ἄρπάζει τὸ καράβι μὲ τὸ χέρι της καὶ τὸ σταματᾷ. ’Απαί, φωνάζει τὸν καπετάνο καὶ τὸν ἐρωτᾷ: ’Αλέξανδρος ὁ Βασιλεὺς ζῇ καὶ βασιλεύει; Τρεῖς φορὰς τὸν ἐρωτᾷ, ψυχή μου, καὶ τρεῖς φορὰς ὁ καπετάνος σὰν τῆς εἰπῇ πῶς ζῇ καὶ βασιλεύει, τὸν ἀφήνει καὶ πάγει στὴν δουλειά του. Σὰν τῆς εἰπῇ πῶς δὲν ζῇ, τὸν βουλᾷ καὶ τὸν πνίγει!

Καὶ ἀναποδίσας τὴν κάλτσαν τῆς γιαγιάς καὶ σείσας αὐτὴν οὕτως, ὥστε νὰ πέσῃ τὸ ἐντὸς αὐτῆς κουβάριον, μοὶ ἔδειξε πῶς ναυαγοῦν τὰ πλοῖα ὁ παπποῦς, καί—Γι’ αὐτὸ ἐπρόσθεσε—καλλίτερα, ψυχή μου, ποὺ δὲν τὴν εἶδες.

—’Ω βέβαια καλλίτερα, παπποῦ! Γιατί, διές, πῶς θὰ ἐπήγαινα στὴν Πόλη σὰν *ἰπνίγο-μουν*; Νὰ ἰδῇς δὲ παπποῦ, τί μεγάλη που εἶναι ἡ Πόλη, καὶ τί λογῆς λογῆς ἄνθρωποι ποὺ εἶν’ αὐτοῦ καὶ χανούμισσας καὶ βασιλοπούλ . . .

—’Ας τ’ αὐτά!!! διέκοψεν ὁ παπποῦς πάλιν, ὥς ἔαν ὠμῶν περὶ πραγμάτων κοινῶν καὶ τετριμμένων. Εἶδες τὸν τόπο, ποὺ εἶναι οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ μαρμαρωμένοι;

—’Οχι, παπποῦ! Δὲν τὸν εἶδα!

—’Αἶχ! ψυχή μου. Τίποτε δὲν εἶδες, στὴν ζωὴ σου, τίποτε!

—What’s she like, grandpa, the Seal?

—Like this, Grandfather said, rapidly moving his hands in such a way as if he had the Seal in front of him and was marking out the shape of her limbs for me.—From the navel up she’s the most beautiful woman, from the navel down she’s the most terrifying fish. She lives on the sea’s bottom. But when she senses a boat’s shadow passing over,

she goes hip-hop! and she's up on top. Then she goes hop-hip! and she grabs the boat in her hand and stops it. Well, then she yells at the cap'n asking: King Alexander, does he live and is he ruling? Three times she asks him, my soul, and three times if the cap'n says he lives and rules, she lets him go. If he says he's not alive, she sinks and drowns him!

And, turning over Grandma's stocking with a shake just so as to make the ball of wool fall out from inside it, Grandfather showed me how ships are sunk,—and—That's just why, he added, it's better, my soul, you didn't see her.

—Oh of course it was better, grandpa! Because, look, how'd I have gone to the City if I'd *drowned*? You should just see, grandpa, how big the City is, and how many, many folks are there, high-born women and princesses . . .

—Forget them!!! Grandfather interrupted once more, as though I were speaking of things common and outworn.

—Did you see the place with the marble people?

—No, grandpa, I didn't see it!

—Aha! my soul. You've seen nothing in your life, nothing at all!

“Journey,” pp. 189–90 (italics mine)

The next passage is perhaps the best of several ekphraseis in the course of the story. In contrast to the narrator's informal tone when talking to his grandfather (including the dialect form *ἰπνύγομουν*, which I have rendered “drowned”), the language here is fairly high katharevousa, appropriate to the mythical—almost mystical—quality of the scene. His grandfather has just told him about his “girlhood,” early marriage and failure even to set out on a single journey—except for one to a seemingly proximate but actually very distant hilltop, although that too remained unfinished. “How, grandpa? When?”:

Ὁ γέρον παρήτησε τὸ ἐργόχειρόν του χαμαί, καὶ τείνας τὸ βλέμμα πρὸς τὸν ὀρίζοντα, ἐφαίνετο ἐνασχολῶν σιγηλὰ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς του μὲ τὴν θέαν τῆς πρὸ ἡμῶν ἐκτεινομένης χωριογραφίας.

Ὁ οὐρανὸς ἦτον ἀνέφελος· ὁ ἥλιος χαμηλὰ εἰς τὸν ὀρίζοντα· καὶ τὸ ὑψηλὸν τῆς θέσεως, ἐφ' ἧς εὕρισκόμεθα, παρεῖχεν εἰς τὸν θεατὴν λίαν ἄχανες καὶ ὅμως λίαν εὐπερίληπτον πανόραμα.

Περὶ τὰ κράσπεδα τῆς ἀκροπόλεως, ἀμέσως ὑπὸ τὰ βλέμματά μας, ἔκειντο κατὰ συγκεχυμένας ὁμάδας αἱ οἰκίαι τῆς πολίχνης, ἐν ταῖς αὐλαῖς τῶν ὁποίων ἔβλεπέ τις ἄνδρας, γυναῖκας, παιδιά, ἐνασχολουμένους νὰ εἰσαγάγωσι τὰ φθινοπωρινὰ αὐτῶν προϊόντα εἰς τὰς ἀποθήκας. Ἀμέσως περὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐφαίνοντο οἱ λαχανόκηποι μὲ τὰ γηραλέα, τὰ φυλλορροοῦντα δένδρα περὶ τοὺς λελυμένους φραγμούς των· καὶ τοὺς τελευταίους τρυγητὰς, φορτώνοντας τὰ ὄψιμα λαχανικὰ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμαξῶν των· αὐτοῦ πλησίον ἐκάπνιζον καιόμενα τὰ ἄχρηστα ἀπομεινάρια τῶν ἐρήμων πλέον ὀλωνίων. Παρέκει ἤρχοντο ἐκτεινόμενοι ἡμικυκλικῶς εἰς μεγίστην ἀκτῖνα οἱ καρποφορώτατοι τῆς χώρας ἀγροί, ἐν οἷς ὅμως δὲν ἐσεύοντο πλέον βαρεῖς τῶν δημητριακῶν οἱ στάχυς, ὡς ἐπιφάνεια ξανθῆς κυμαινομένης θαλάσσης, ἀλλ' ἔβοσκον ἐλευθέρως, δαπανῶντα καὶ τὴν τελευταίαν χλωρὰν βοτάνην τὰ βραδέως πρὸς τὴν πόλιν ἐπιστρέφοντα ποιμνία καὶ αἱ ἀγέλαι. Εἰς τὸ ἀπώτατον τοῦ ὀρίζοντος βάθος ἔκλειον, ὡς ὑψηλὸν περιθώριον, τὴν ἄχανῃ ταύτην εἰκόνα οἱ ἀμπελώνες τοῦ τόπου, ἔρημοι καὶ οὗτοι μετὰ τὸν τρυγητὸν κ' ἐγκαταλελειμμένοι. Ἡ λαμπρὰ ποικιλία τῶν τελευταίων φθινοπωρινῶν χρωμάτων, οἱ κατὰ συχνὰ διαστήματα διαυλακοῦντες τὴν χώραν ποταμίσκοι, τὰ παρὰ τὰς ὄχθας αὐτῶν γραφικῶς ἐγειρόμενα συμπλέγματα δένδρων καὶ οἰκοδομῶν, οἱ κατὰ τόπους ὡς μέγιστα κωνοειδῆ χρώματα ὑψούμενοι τῶν Ὀδρυσῶν τύμβοι ὅχι μόνον διέκοπτον τὴν συνήθη τῶν ἐπιπέδων χωριογραφιῶν μονοτονίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρείχον εἰς τὴν ἀπέραντον ἐκείνην εἰκόνα ἐκτακτον, θαυμασίαν ἐνότητά καὶ ποικιλίαν.

Καὶ ὅμως πρὸ τοῦ τερπνοτάτου τούτου θεάματος—τὸ ἐνθυμοῦμαι ἀκόμη—μυστική τις ἀνησυχία, θλιβερόν τι προαίσθημα συνέχευε τὴν καρδίαν μου. Ἐνόμιζες, ὅτι ἡ ζωὴ, ἢ ἄλλοτε τόσο σφριγώδως ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας ταύτης ἐπανθήσασα, ὑπεχώρει τώρα βραδέως, ἀλλὰ σταθερῶς πρὸς τοὺς ἐνδοτάτους μυχοὺς τῆς φύσεως· ἢ δ' ἐπὶ τῆς ὀψέως αὐτῆς ἐναπομένουσα λαμπρότης δὲν ἦτον εἰ μὴ τὸ τελευταῖον, τὸ ὕστατον μειδίημα ἐπὶ τῶν χειλέων τοῦ θανατιῶντος.

The old man put his handiwork aside on the ground, and extending his gaze toward the horizon, he seemed silently to busy his eyes with the sight of the townscape unfolding before us.

The sky was cloudless; the sun low on the horizon; and the height of the position we were in afforded the spectator a view from above at once boundless and commensurable.

Around the borders of the hilltop settlement immediately beneath our gaze lay town houses in huddled confusion; in the courtyards one could discern men, women, children, busily garnering in their autumn produce. In the immediate environs of the town could be seen vegetable gardens with aging trees shedding leaves around decrepit fences; and straggling harvesters, loading the last fruits onto their wagons; nearby, smoke was still rising from the burning chaff of now deserted threshing floors. Just beyond, stretching out crescent-shaped in a huge arc, came the land's most fruit-yielding fields, wherein, however, ears of Demeter's grain no longer swayed heavy with produce like the surface of the golden-waved sea; instead, freely grazing sheep and cattle fed on the last blade of green as they were slowly herded back to town. At the furthest sweep of the horizon the local vineyards, likewise deserted after the harvest and now abandoned, closed round this immense picture like a tall frame. The brilliant variegation of the last autumn colors, the streams ribboning across the land in regular strips, the trees and houses vividly gathering in clusters around their banks, the Odryssean tombs raised up like huge cone-shaped mounds here and there, not only broke the usual monotony of flat land and townscapes, but lent also to that boundless picture an exquisite, wondrous unity and variety.

And yet in front of this most entrancing spectacle—I still recall it—some hidden anxiety, some kind of foreboding was stealing over my heart. You would think that life, that once so vigorously blossomed forth in that land, was now seeping slowly yet steadily down inwards into nature's innermost recesses; the smile on her face was but the last, ultimate smile on the lips of one in the throes of death.

"Journey," pp. 196–97

This is a "set piece," an ekphrasis or prose poem with no direct relevance to the story but with a deeper, almost allegorical signification well attested in traditions, like Greek and Irish, with a dual literary and oral heritage. Images of sewing and painting are exploited to "frame," as it were, the miniature, looking both inward and outward. At the same time, wonder-tale themes of the lower world and human dependence on nature are called to mind with new significations. It has an elegiac quality, the late autumnal mood forming an interesting converse to Libanios' classic Byzantine ekphrasis on spring and its promise of regeneration:

Τὸ δὲ ἔαρ . . . ἐλευθεροῖ γὰρ τὰς ἀκτῖνας τῶν νεφῶν. Καὶ τότε δὴ φαιδρός τε ἥλιος καὶ ἡμερος καὶ τερπνός. . . . Ἡ γῆ δὲ τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς ἐκφέρει, καὶ χλωρὰ τότε τὰ λῆια γεωργοὺς εὐφραίνοντα ταῖς ἐλπίσιν. Ἀλλὰ καὶ δένδρα τὴν κόμην ἀπολαμβάνει καὶ πάντα ἐν ἐπαγγελίαις καρπῶν. . . . Ἀνοίγνυται τότε καὶ ἡ θάλαττα τοῖς πλωτήρσιν. Οὐ γὰρ ὑψηλὰ τότε τὰ κύματα οὔτε ὄρεσιν ἐοικότα, ἀλλ' ὑπτία μὲν αὐτῇ τὰ νῶτα. . . .

Ποταμοὶ δὲ οἱ μὲν ἀέναοι καθαροί, οἱ δὲ χεῖμαρροι σωφρονέστεροι. Καὶ αἱ πηγαὶ δὲ πολὺ βελτίους ἢ τοῦ χειμῶνος. . . . Ἐοίκασιν δ' ἀναβεβιωκόσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι . . . τρυφῶντες ἐν ὀρνίθων τε ὠδαῖς καὶ ἀνθέων ὀσμαῖς. Αἰδεῖ μὲν ἐν ἔαρι χελιδὼν, ᾄδει δὲ καὶ ἀηδὼν. . . . Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τῶν ὀρνίθων γένη φαίνεται πανταχοῦ πετόμενα. . . . Ἄγροὶ δὲ ἡδιστοὶ φωνῇ τε ἀρνῶν καὶ ὅπερ ἔφην ἤδη, τοῖς ἀνθεσι, τῷ ῥόδῳ, τῷ ἴῳ, τῷ κρόνῳ, τοῖς ἄλλοις ἃ ἡδὺ μὲν ἰδεῖν, ἡδὺ δὲ καὶ εἰς χεῖρας λαβεῖν.

This spring . . . frees the [sun's] rays from the clouds. Then the sun is bright and gentle and delightful. . . . The earth brings forth its products, and then green fields gladden the farmers with hope. And the trees also regain their foliage, and everything promises fruits. . . . Then the sea lies open to sailors. Then the waves are not high, nor are they like mountains, but the surface of the sea is smooth . . . the perennial rivers are clear, the winter streams are more moderate. And the springs are much better than in winter. . . . Men seem to have returned to life . . . taking delight in the songs of the birds and the scents of the flowers. The swallow sings in the spring, as does the nightingale. . . . But also the other species of birds appear everywhere flying. . . . The meadows are very sweet with the voices of lambs and, as I have said already, with flowers, with roses, with violets, with lilies, with all the other flowers that are not only sweet to see, but also sweet to take in one's hands.

Libanios, ed. Foerster viii. 479 ff: text and tr. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence*, 42–43, 123

Ekphrasis is, of course, a regular feature of the ancient and Byzantine novels of love and adventure, where it takes the form of a highly stylized description of landscape, akropolis, fair, garden, statue, painting, often immediately preceding the hero/ine's falling in love, thus signaling—like dreams—a change of direction or mood in plot or character. Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, for example, has the greatest concentration of ekphraseis (on gardens, statues, and paintings) in Books II through IV, when Hysminias responds through dreams to Hysmine's love.⁴⁶ But the closest thematic parallel to Vizyenos' passage would seem to be from the twelfth-century satirical dialogue *Timarion*, when Timarion, perched on the akropolis high above Thessaloniki, describes the bustling scene of the fair below in graphic—and minutely accurate—historical detail.⁴⁷

And yet, it would be a mistake to attribute Vizyenos' use of ekphrasis only to the learned Byzantine and ancient past, even if a direct connection could be proved. Rather, it stems from a dual tradition, at once oral and literary, as in the west of Ireland, where the medieval bardic *aisling*, "vision," was not only cultivated by peasant poets of the

⁴⁶*Erotici scriptores graeci*, ed. R. Hercher (Leipzig, 1858), I, 2. On dreams and ekphrasis in this and other romances, see S. MacAlister, "Ancient and Contemporary in Byzantine Novels," in *Search for the Ancient Novel* (forthcoming); and Littlewood, "Romantic Paradises," 95–114; S. A. Takacs, "Manuel Philes' Meditation on an Icon of the Virgin Mary," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990), 277–88. This remarkable poem is cited as the epigraph to my concluding comments, p. 285, below.

⁴⁷For text and translations, see R. Romano, *Timarione: Testo critico, introduzione, traduzione, commentario e lessico* (Naples, 1974), 53–58; B. Baldwin, *Timarion*, translated with introduction (Detroit, 1984). For literary commentary and analysis, see M. Alexiou, "Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: A Stylistic Analysis of the Timarion (ch. 6–10)," *BMGS* 3.8 (1982), 29–45. Historical appraisals can be found in S. Vryonis, "The Panegyris of the Byzantine Saint," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel, (London, 1981), 196–228; M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, 330–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 38.

eighteenth century, but incorporated into the bio-mythographies of the Blasket Islands within living memory. Maurice O'Sullivan, in *Twenty Years A-Growing*, perhaps comes closest to Vizyenos in combining intimate conversation with descriptive reverie. Like the narrator of "Journey," Maurice has a close relationship with his grandfather. Together they visit Pierce's Cave:

My grandfather and I were lying on the Castle Summit. It was a fine sunny day in July. The sun was splitting the stones with its heat and the grass burnt to its roots. I could see Iveragh painted in many colours by the sun. South-west were the Skelligs glistening white and the sea around them dotted with fishing-boats from England.

—Isn't it a fine healthy life those fishermen have, daddo? said I.

I got no answer. Turning round I saw that the old man was asleep. I looked at him, thinking. You were one day in the flower of youth, said I in my own mind, but, my sorrow, the skin of your brow is wrinkled now and the hair on your head is grey. You are without suppleness in your limbs and without pleasure in the grand view to be seen from this hill. But alas, if I live, some day I will be as you are now.

The heat was very great, and so I thought of waking him for fear the sun would kill him. I caught him by his grey beard and gave it a pull. He opened his eyes and looked around.

—Oh Muirisheen, said he, I fell asleep. Am I long in it?

—Not long, said I, but I thought I had better wake you on account of the sun. Do you see those trawlers out on the horizon? I was just saying that it's a fine healthy life they have!

—Musha, my heart, said my grandfather, a man of the sea never had a good life and never will, as I know well, having spent my days on it, and I have gone through as many perils on it as there are grey hairs in my head, and I am telling you now, wherever God may guide you, keep away from the sea.

—Musha, it seems to me there is no man on earth so contented as a seaman. I looked south-east to the Macgillicuddy Reeks. They looked as if they were touching the sky.

—Musha, aren't those high mountains?

—They are indeed, if you were down at their foot.

Maurice O'Sullivan, *Twenty Years A-Growing*, translated from the Irish
by George Thomson, 1953, pp. 82–83

Another Irish set piece on "Nightfall":

It was growing late. The sun was sinking on the horizon, the dew falling heavily as the air cooled, the dock leaves closing up for the night, the birds crying as they came back to their young, rabbits rushing through the fern as they left the warrens, the sparkle gone out of the Kerry diamonds, and a lonesome look coming over the ravines.—It is night, Tomás. [ibid.]

These "word-pictures" express a profound harmony between human and natural life in terms of the eternal cycle of day and night, summer and winter, life and death. Signs are described apparently at random, yet as if in the process of being seen and heard, with no logical pattern or sustained description, but in a series of paradoxical juxtapositions. As in the lament, or the wonder-tale, what was in the past is no longer present, what is here now was not there then. Just as progymnasmata "exercises" punc-

tuate Byzantine romances, medieval Irish narrative poems such as *The Midnight Court* are introduced by the hero with a series of reflective “aislings.”⁴⁸

Can ekphrasis be integrated with narrative? As we saw, according to the view prevailing in the West since at least the eighteenth century, it interrupts the narrative flow, it pays obsessive attention to irrelevant detail, it focuses on outmoded rhetoric while adding nothing to action, plot, or character. Yet Vizyenos uses it to probe the inner world of his narrators and characters, as well as to explore the cognitive processes through the senses of sight and sound. Georgis, strapped round the middle by the broad red sash of the family servant Thymios, nods off to sleep on the macabre horseback ride home from the City to Vizye. There follows this dream ekphrasis:

Ἦτο φθινόπωρον καὶ ἤρχιζεν ἤδη νὰ καλονυκτώνῃ· ψυχροὶ πλέον οἱ ἄνεμοι ἐσύριζον διὰ τῶν ἀραιῶν τοῦ δάσους δένδρων, ταράσσοντες τὸν ριγηλὸν ὕπνον τῶν ἡμιγύμων αὐτῶν κλαδίων, ἀφ’ ὧν, κλαυθμηρῶς γογγύζοντα, ἐστροβιλίζοντο ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐδάφους ἀναριθμητὰ φύλλα. Κατὰ τοιαύτας νύκτας, ἢ ἐκ διαλειμμάτων ὀπισθεν θολερῶν συννέφων προφαίνουσα σελήνη, αὐξάνουσα τὴν ἀγρίαν μελαγχολίαν τῆς Φύσεως διὰ τῶν ὠχρῶν, τῶν “νεκροχλῶμων” αὐτῆς ἐπιχρώσεων, ἀντὶ νὰ παρηγορήσῃ, πληροὶ τὴν καρδίαν τοῦ ὁδοιπόρου ἀορίστων φόβων καὶ ἐπανειλημμένων φρικιάσεων. Τὴν ἀγριότητα τοῦ ἡμετέρου ταξιδίου ἐπηύξανεν ἢ ἀνώμαλος ταχύτης, μεθ’ ἧς ὁ ὑψηλὸς ἡμῶν ἵππος παρήλαυνεν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἐκατέρωθεν τῆς ὁδοῦ ἀντικειμένων, πρὶν ἢ προφθάσω νὰ διακρίνω τὰ ἀμφίβολά των σχήματα πρὸς καθυσύχασιν τῆς ὑπόπτου καρδίας μου. Ἡ διαρκὴς καὶ ἐπίσημος σιγὴ τοῦ Θύμιου, τὸ ἀπρομελέτητον τῆς ὁδοιπορίας, ὁ σκοπὸς, δι’ ὃν αὕτη ἐγίνετο, ὁ τρόπος τῆς φανταστικῆς ἐκείνης ἱππασίας, ἐν ᾗ κατὰ μὲν τὸ ἥμισυ ἐκρεμάμην ἀπὸ τῆς ζώνης τοῦ Θύμιου κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἥμισυ ἐλικνιζόμην ἐπὶ τῶν ὀπισθίων τοῦ ἵππου—ταῦτα πάντα ἐνῶ ἐκράτουν τὴν παιδικὴν μου καρδίαν εἰς διαρκῆ ἀνησυχίαν, ἐξήπτον τὴν φαντασίαν μου μέχρι παραισθησίας.

Δὲν νομίζω νὰ ἡτένισα κατὰ τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην παραδόξους συμπτώσεις νεφῶν, τῶν μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν δὲ φερομένων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνέμου, χωρὶς νὰ τὰ συμπληρώσω τῇ βοηθείᾳ τοῦ σεληνιακοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τῆς προκατειλημμένης φαντασίας εἰς πελώριον σύμπλεγμα παλαιστῶν ἀγωνιζομένων τὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ὅλων κίνδυνον. Ὁ εἷς μὲ τὸ λευκὸν καὶ πολύπτυχον αὐτοῦ ἐσώβρακον ἀνεμιζόμενον εἰς τὸν ἄερα, μὲ τὰ εὐρέα, τὰ κεντητὰ “μανίκια” τοῦ ὑποκαμίσου τοῦ ἦτον ἀναμφιβόλως ὁ παπποῦς μου. Ὁ ἕτερος μὲ τὴν μακρὰν καὶ λυτὴν αὐτοῦ κόμην κυμαινομένην, μὲ τὰς λευκάς ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτέρυγας, μὲ τὸν φολιδωτὸν τοῦ θώρακα περὶ τὸ στήθος καὶ τὴν φλογίνην ρομφαίαν εἰς τὴν γυμνὴν δεξιάν του, αὐτὸς ἦτο βεβαίως ὁ ἄγγελος.—Τόσας φορὰς τὸν εἶχον ἰδεῖ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀριστερᾶς θύρας τοῦ ἁγίου βήματος ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ χωρίου μας.

It was autumn, and already night was beginning to draw in; the wind, by now chill, was whistling through the sparse trees of the forest, shaking the shivering sleep from half-nude branches whose countless leaves were whirled groundwards, groaning tears of grief. On such nights as this, the moon, as she appears from behind dim clouds to enlarge Nature's wild blackness with her colourless shades “pale as death,” instead of affording comfort, fills the traveler's heart with ill-defined fears and constant tremors. The wildness of our journey was rendered greater by the uneven speed with which our tall horse plowed objects to each side of the road ahead, before I even had chance to discern their ambivalent shapes in order to restore quiet to my doubting heart. Thymios' enduring and solemn silence, the unexpectedness of the journey and the goal toward which it was aimed, the manner of that fantastic ride, during which one half of

⁴⁸“It gladdened my heart to set eyes on Lough Graney, the lake and the landscape, and on the sunlit horizon the mountains set in a huddle together, nodding their heads from behind one another.” G. Thomson, *Island Home: The Blasket Heritage* (Dingle, 1989), 43.

me was hanging from Thymios' sash while the other half was being cradled on the horse's haunches—all these things held my child's heart in the grip of enduring anxiety, at the same time kindling my imagination to the point of hallucination.

I do not think that I fixed my gaze in the course of that night on weird cloud formations, some above the wind and others swept along by it, without filling them in with the aid of the moonlight and predisposed imagination into a huge tangle of wrestlers risking all in combat. The one with his white and many pleated bloomers blowing in the breeze, with the broad embroidered sleeves of his shirt, was without doubt my grandfather. The other with his long hair flowing loose, with the white wings on his shoulders, with the scale armored breast-plate on his chest and the fiery sword in his bare right hand, he was surely the angel.—I had seen him so many times on the left-hand door of the sanctuary in our village church.

“Journey,” 181–82

The visual imagery in this passage is carefully wrought on complex spatio-temporal levels. Everything the boy sees is in motion, and his blurred sensations are made palpable to the reader by use of imperfective tenses and moods for all verbal forms except two, both encased in negative phrases with reference to the boy's state of mind and intense watchfulness, usually conveyed in Greek by the imperfective: ἀντὶ νὰ μὲ παρηγορήσῃ, “instead of affording comfort,” and Δὲν νομίζω νὰ ἡτένισα . . . χωρὶς νὰ, “I do not think that I fixed my gaze . . . without.” Thus, “normal” temporal usage is reversed: what “happens” is imperfective, what is “felt” is (negated) perfective. The terrifying instability of the boy's visual world stands in stark contrast to the fixity of both his physical state, literally strapped by a sash like a peasant's soul-less bundle to the rider's waist (ὥς ἐὰν ἦμην κανὲν ἄψυχον παράρτημα) and his emotional state of enduring anxiety (διαρκὴ ἀνησυχίαν). And his visual nightmare is further intensified by enduring and solemn silence (ἡ διαρκῆς καὶ ἐπίσημος σιγή) throughout the “journey.”⁴⁹ As the narrator wryly reminds us, had Thymios not thought to strap him in, there would have been no one seated behind to talk to anyway!

Vizyenos' tendency to define positives in terms of negatives, presence as absence, action as inaction, and to merge narrative silence with written eloquence, can be found in all his stories, especially at their conclusion.⁵⁰ Yet in this ekphrasis, the very absence of normal modes of cognition (observation, conversation) allows him to complete, through imagination and memory, the verbal picture of the night ride. He “fills in” the fragmented and distorted images of nature unfolding before him with an icon of the Archangel Michael remembered from childhood. Nature—trees, clouds, wind, moon—become animate, only humanity is silenced, frozen in fear. On the mythical level, this ekphrasis subtly combines motifs from Greek songs of xenitia with Goethe's *Erkönig*.⁵¹

⁴⁹Charles Stewart, in his paper “Dreams in Byzantine and Modern Greek Culture,” D.O. Colloquium, 1991, selects this dream sequence as one of the leading examples from modern Greek literature which illustrates links both with the oral-literary past and with the present and future, informed by psychoanalysis and literary criticism: it is “traditional” in its imagery and formulation, yet “modern” in its refusal to be prophetic: grandson finds grandfather alive and well, and grandfather dies peacefully, having completed “the only journey of his life” (“Journey,” 200–201). See also Stewart, *Demons and the Devil* (Princeton, 1991), for much interesting field information on dream narratives.

⁵⁰See Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 115.

⁵¹See G. Saunier, *Tò δημοτικὸ τραγοῦδι τῆς Ξενιτειᾶς* (Athens, 1983), 36–37 (5a and 5b), for songs which contain the motif of the girl's dream of her lover's riderless horse, its saddle crumpled, his sword broken, and his fine kerchief trampled in the mud. For the motif of dirtied clothes in songs of xenitia, see

Whether or not Vizyenos was insane at the end of his life, he has left us an indelible word picture of what it might *feel* like to be insane.

Vizyenos, through his interweaving of narrative and descriptive modes, and through intertextual allusion, brings together diverse traditions—oral and literary, modern, medieval, and ancient—to produce a distinctive form of prose fiction which reintegrates poetry and prose, music and song, above all nature and art. What he may appear (for the Western reader) to lack in complexity and diversification of character is compensated for by richness and depth of texture, as well as by the musical structure of composition. Vizyenos encapsulates in compact artistic form the difference between European and “other” modes of fiction. In the former, there is a clear distinction between subject and object, beholder and beheld; in the latter, the beholder provides the emotional bridge between image and mind—the force of images is subjective, so that the beholder completes, and becomes part of, the “picture of reality.”⁵²

In that space myths and metaphors can be creatively explored and developed. The difference between Vizyenos’ sense of topos and tropos (geographical space and narrative mode) and that of his Helladic contemporaries is unspoken yet profound. In “Killer,” the “City” is not the idealized Constantinople of the Byzantine past, as in Palamas or Psicharis, but the Ottoman Istanbul of the present, with reference to Νεότουρκοι, to whirling dervishes, to the Topkapı palace with its eunuchs and rich hangings, to Turkish households, hans, bazaars, and guilds.⁵³ His language is not demotic, but mixed, obliquely justified by reference to Ibsen and the split between Norwegian and Danish. His literary allusions bring under scrutiny not just the medieval, Renaissance, and romantic West and North, but the Balkan and Ottoman East as well, while offering a subtle challenge to the Western canon of literature and its appropriation of Hellenism. For Vizyenos, prose fiction needs more than the written word alone, more than mere “histoire,” “récit,” and “narration”; it needs the “bones” along with the “meat,” as the (uneducated) Michalis reminds the (educated) narrator Georgis in “Killer.”⁵⁴ It also needs images and music (sight and sound) to fill in the tones and colors of human emotion, as the narrator of “Consequences” reminds us as he listens to the mad German girl singing Vizyenos’ own poem.

The power of music and image to inspire and express love, especially through a portrait, is a favorite theme of Greek and Oriental wonder-tales.⁵⁵ It may not be possible

note 40, above, and Saunier (168–70, 2a–2c). For the wide acclaim, granted by the early 1880s to Schubert’s musical renderings of Goethe’s poems, see Grove’s *Dictionary of Music*, 1883.

⁵² See Brubaker on Byzantine icons, “Byzantine Art in the Ninth Century,” 80 (cited in note 19).

⁵³ For a well-documented analysis of Vizyenos’ precisely researched historical and ethnic background to this story, see Chryssanthopoulos, *Vizyenos*, 103–21.

⁵⁴ Three times N interrupts his brother Michalios’ narrative with impatient reminders to “keep to the story” (ἱστορία); finally, Michalios loses patience and retorts with the passage cited above as epigraph, p. 270. Further ironies are concealed in the details the narrator considers “irrelevant”: how his uneducated brother paid willingly out of his own pocket for his mother’s indulgencies; how his mother was driven to distraction by his own absence to adopt a Turk in his stead—in other words he is deaf to all clues as to his own role in “who was my brother’s killer.” Once again, one is reminded of the *Timarion*, where Timarion persistently flouts Kydion’s injunction to adhere to the proper order of the narrative, and accuses Kydion of greed (ἀπληστία), ironically pardoning himself in advance for omitting reference to every crow, stone, and wayside bramble that may have impeded his ride (ch. 3.64–69; cf. ch. 7.206–209, 230–231).

⁵⁵ For the theme in wonder-tales, see for example R. M. Dawkins, *Forty-five Stories from the Dodekanese* (Cambridge, 1950), 334–49 (Μυρμιδονιά και Φαραωνιά), and M. Kambouroglou, *Ἀθηναϊκά Παραμύθια*,

to transcribe it into words alone, but sensual loss is marked by frequent allusion to opera, song, and dance ("Consequences"), and darning, weaving, and embroidery ("Journey"). By "writing against silence," he recreates in fiction the synesthesia implicit in premodern artistic modes, including those of Byzantium, as the narrator of "Consequences" evocatively suggests in his introductory comments to the mad girl's songs:

And now, dear reader, don't expect from mortal pen that I can represent to you the deeply moving scene of which we were the mournful, astonished witnesses. Perhaps some perfected form of phonograph could manage instantaneously to transcribe one by one and preserve the individual notes of that sad music in such a way that it could be read by others as well. But read only, not sung. The demonic force that engulfed us like a magic spirit of life and that inspired the imaginative and improvised arrangements of those notes that were at the same time so simple and yet so inexpressible, the melodic and yet dramatic nuances of each individual line, of each word—yes, of each individual syllable through which she made us see before us with a shudder, alive and moving, those scenes only faintly, only figuratively hinted at in her composition—these things no machine manufactured by mortal hand, no musical genius can repeat or imitate even remotely.

But the sad frailty of her posture, the indefinably desperate expression on her face, and at the same time the special facial movements with which she accompanied the sounds of her voice and the tones of her instrument—what camera, or what super-human painter's skill could transcribe them! I say nothing about genius in writing because the fact that even in this most feeble recounting I am forced to separate the elements of music and physiognomy, things that in nature are so inseparably united, reveals, I think, most clearly, the descriptive imperfection of any written account.

"Consequences" (1884), p. 114, tr. Wyatt, pp. 107–8

V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Τί τοῦτο; καὶ πῶς καὶ παρὰ τέχνης τίνος
εἰκὼν ἀμυδρὰ καὶ σκιώδης εὐρέθης
εἰς εὐτελοῦς ὕφασμα ληφθεῖσα κρόκης;
καὶ πῶς ὁ κηρὸς ἐγγεθεὶς ὑπὸ φλόγα,
κἂν εἰς ὕλην εὐπρηστον οὐκ εἶχε φλέγειν,
ἔγραψε τὸν σὸν πλαστικῶς τοῦτον τύπον;
βαβαί, Μαριάμ, ἔξαμείβεις τὰς φύσεις·
καὶ γὰρ σεαυτὴν ἐκ πυρὸς ξένου γράφεις
αὐθις φανείσα τοῦ πυρὸς κρείσσων βάτος,
οὐ Χριστὸς αὐτὸς πρὸς τὸ πῦρ τῆς λαμπάδος
τὴν μυστικὴν ἄνωθεν ἐκβλύζει δρόσον,
ὥς ἂν ὁ πιστὸς τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην βλέπων
τὴν φασματώδη τῶν παθῶν φεύγῃ φλόγα.

Manuel Philes, "Meditation on an Ikon of the Virgin Mary," ed. A. Martini,
Manuelis Philae carmina inedita (Naples, 1900), 31, no. 21

To sum up: through antithesis and ekphrasis, Vizyenos achieves a mode of representation that signifies on multiple levels. Language, like truth, is neither simple nor

1879 (Ἡ Τρισεύγενη ἢ τὰ τρεῖς κίτρα). One is struck with the remarkable parallels between wonder-tales and opera (above all, of course, with Tamino's aria in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, "Dies Bildniss ist bezaubern'd schön . . ."). By invoking both opera and wonder-tales in his stories, Vizyenos allows us to make the connection, and to appreciate the complexity and richness of texture missing from the realism and naturalism enjoined by the Greek literary establishment, in accordance with prevailing Western trends.

transparent, and there is no point in seeking an eternal truth or meaning in Vizyenos' stories. Ironic juxtapositions and ambivalent dialogues engage the reader on both intellectual and emotional levels. It is the inner code, not the external packaging as with his "Helladic" contemporaries, that is Byzantine in essence.

I have been careful to avoid suggesting that Vizyenos consciously exploits or alludes to Byzantium, despite the parallel uses of antithesis and ekphrasis. So what did Byzantium contribute to his intellectual and aesthetic perceptions, and how? First, as a *τουρκομερίτης* from Ottoman Thrace, he was more sensitive than his Greek contemporaries to those features of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity which the Ottomans inherited from Byzantium, even though he may have discarded their imperial models of statehood. Second, the broad, cosmopolitan frame of reference in his critical essays on literature, language, and folk songs makes it unlikely that he was not aware of the Byzantine heritage, even if he was reluctant to parade it for the purposes of patriotism and nationalism in the manner of his contemporaries, literary advocates of the *Μεγάλη Ιδέα*, such as Palamas, Psicharis, Politis. But above all, Byzantium's greatest contribution to modern Greek literature has been the multitonned, multicolored registers and textures of the Greek language itself, as Robert Browning's sensitive studies of Byzantine Greek have shown.⁵⁶ It is to his credit that Vizyenos, like Cavafy, chose to exploit its full musical range and polysemy rather than restrict it to the major demoticist key.⁵⁷ Do modern Greek writers of Vizyenos' caliber have anything to offer in return to Byzantium and Byzantinists? Less remote from our own times, they provide, without vulgarization, a means of "writing against the silence" of past and present.

Harvard University

⁵⁶R. A. Browning, "The Language of Byzantine Literature," *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina* 1, ed. S. Vryonis (Malibu, Calif., 1978), 103–34; *Medieval and Modern Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1983).

⁵⁷The Greek-American translator and poet, Olga Broumas, when asked why she had chosen to translate Elytis rather than Cavafy, replied that any attempt to render Cavafy's Greek into English was rather like reducing a polyphonic symphony to black notes on a page (Seminar on Translation, Boston University, May 1988). P. A. Mackridge, "The Protean Self of Costas Taktisis," *The European Gay Review* 6–7 (1991), 172–84, highlights certain features of Taktisis' language, intertextuality and modes of representing "character" which are aptly compared with those of Vizyenos and Cavafy (pp. 174–75).